

BioResource Now!

Issue Number 6 March 2010



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Hot News from Abroad No. 29

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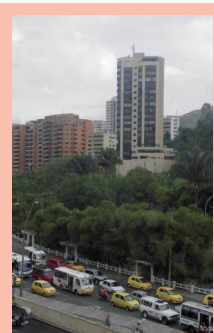
National Institute of Genetics
Intellectual Property Unit
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A report on the 9th Meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABSWG-9) of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Proposal of a merely provisional draft protocol in Cali, Colombia, created concerns about COP10 Nagoya and expectations from Japan, the host of COP10 Cali, Colombia (March 22–28, 2010)



Cali, Colombia, South America



Picture 1: View of Cali city in the morning, from a hotel window

Relatively new cars and compact yellow taxis of Korean make are seen in the city, whereas horse carts are also found in the suburbs. Although the bright sunlight during the day evokes a feeling of early summer, it gets windy during the evening and chilly at night. This is the city of Cali, Colombia, South America (Picture 1).

The 9th Meeting of the Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABSWG-9) of the Convention on Biological Diversity was held from March 22 to March 28, 2010, and 600 administration officials, relevant authorities, and ethnic groups from 120 countries participated in the meeting. The aim of the meeting was to finalize the international framework for the 10th Session of the Conference of Parties, which would be organized in Nagoya in 2010. However, mutual understanding of access and benefit sharing (ABS) between the developed and developing countries was not gained and, after all, only a provisional draft protocol, regarding which further negotiation was suspended, was prepared at the end of the meeting.

The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Significance of the Meeting

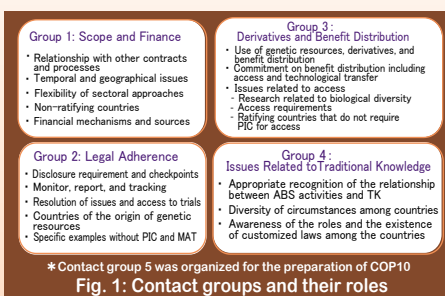
The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was initiated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was first signed in 1992, and currently, 192 countries, including Japan, are signatories. Meanwhile, the US has not ratified the treaty. The aims of the CBD are defined as “the conservation of biological diversity,” “the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity,” and “the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.”

Article 15 of the CBD states the necessity of prior informed consent (PIC) and mutually agreed terms (MAT) for accessing genetic resources and distributing the benefits gained by using the resources. In addition stipulations regarding access to the biological resources, transfer of technology, and handling and distribution of the benefits gained by biotechnology are also defined as related matters.

At COP8 organized in Brazil in 2006, it was promised that discussions regarding the international framework would end by the time of COP10. ABSWG-9 was the last meeting of the working group before COP10; therefore, the aim of the meeting was to continue negotiations related to the international framework of ABS and to adhere to the draft protocol.

Conference Agenda

The co-chairs emphasized at the first plenary session that only 7 days remained for discussing and finalizing the protocol before COP10 is held in Nagoya and stated that the Cali meeting would aim at finalizing the draft protocol. The problems faced in each country were presented in the afternoon, and 4 contact groups (later 5 groups, including an additional group for the preparation of COP10) were formed on the basis of the issues. The first group is responsible for the scope and finance; the second group, the issues related to legal adherence; the third group, the sharing of derivatives and distribution of benefits; and the fourth group, the traditional knowledge (TK) (Fig. 1). Group discussions were conducted from the afternoon of the second day until the night of the fourth day, and an interregional group (IG) meeting was organized on the fifth and sixth days (Picture 2).



While the countries with resources demanded an expansion of derivatives and an enhancement of checkpoints in the surveillance system, the developed countries insisted that this was impossible because of unprotected trade secrets. Accordingly, the discussions lasted for days without any progress being made. On the night of the fifth day, the African countries proposed that the IG meeting be temporarily conducted as a closed meeting. The African countries later suggested that the draft prepared at this meeting be considered as inconclusive, and this was then stated on the footnote of the draft of the Cali protocol. Further negotiations were suspended, and a provisional draft protocol was prepared.

Eventually, “the way from Cali to Nagoya” was discussed at the plenary meeting of the final day and, 2 additional meetings were organized before the Nagoya meeting in October in order to further discuss the Nagoya Protocol.



Picture 2: IG meeting in a conference hall

Influences on Universities

Systematization of PIC and MAT has progressed in the countries with domestic legislations. Researchers presumably do not carry genetic resources across international borders any more. However, the approval from the researcher in the country with the resources is not sufficient to legalize the transfer of genetic resources. I will endeavor to widely publicize the necessity of obtaining permission from the government authorities before transporting genetic resources from a country.

Most countries suggested that the use of genetic resources for research purposes should be distinguished from that for commercial use. In addition, although the development of a simple access method to genetic resources for nonprofit uses was proposed by Japan, the laws governing such usage may need to be strengthened.

In future, there will be a greater need for administrating PIC and MAT in universities, and the management of genetic resources from overseas will have to be transparent and systematic. Moreover, once domestic legislations have been established in Japan, the influence on university researchers could be significant.



Closing

The co-chairs closed the meeting by hitting a mallet and said, "Nice meeting, adjudge!" However, the negotiation was withheld and only a provisional draft protocol was prepared, and the road to Nagoya was still fraught with difficulties. Nevertheless, the countries that participated in the meeting applauded the remark by a delegate from Japan on the final day of the meeting; this gesture showed that the members had great expectations from Japan—the next presidency holder.

My participation in ABSWG-9 was a valuable experience in that, unlike an academic conference, the schedule was determined on the day of the meeting, the meeting was abruptly interrupted and continued till night, and diplomatic protocols were observed.

The Cali Event Center, the meeting venue, is approximately 30 min from the city center of Cali by car. In the morning, a dedicated bus left the hotel for the meeting venue, and at night, it came back to the hotel escorted by the police through poorly lit streets; this routine was repeated for a week. The salsa dance party, which was attended by the economy minister, hosted by the Colombian government on the first day and the taste of free Colombian coffee during the meeting and Club Colombia—a local beer—at night are unforgettable indeed.



Let's speed up website load time!

Ongoing Column [No. 48]



Internet connection speed has been increasing year by year, and the necessary information can now be easily accessed. However, due to the increase in network speed, the bottleneck which slows down the display of a website has shifted from connection speed to a website's load time. This time, I would like to introduce a relatively easy-to-adopt and effective tool that measures and analyzes the loading speed of websites for website developers and programmers.



1 YSlow

YSlow is a Firefox plug-in released by Yahoo! Developer Network. YSlow defines 22 rules to speed up website load time (as of March 31, 2010) and websites are evaluated on the basis of a set of rules ranging from "A" to "F." "A" indicates that the website loading speed is maximized and "F" shows that there is room for increasing the speed.

YSlow has been found to be compatible with Firefox version 3.6 and Firefox version 1.5.3.

2 Installation of YSlow

First, Firefox and Firebug should be installed in order to use YSlow. Next, download YSlow from the distribution site, <http://developer.yahoo.com/yslow/>, and restart Firefox. Click on the Firebug icon on the bottom right of the browser to launch Firebug (Fig. 1). Subsequently, click on the YSlow tab that appears on the screen to launch YSlow (Fig. 2-1). This will complete the installation of YSlow.

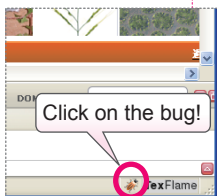


Fig. 1: Method to open a Firebug window



Fig. 2: Method to open a YSlow window

3 Using YSlow

Open the website whose loading speed is to be measured and launch YSlow. Next, select the rule sets (Fig. 3-1). The rule sets are the generalized rules that are useful for speeding up the load time according to the scale of the websites. The rule sets contain "YSlow (V2)" and "Classic (V1)" for large-scale websites and "Small site or Blog" for small-scale websites. This time, select "Classic (V1)" and press the "Run Test" button, and then, the overall and itemized evaluations will be displayed (Fig. 3-2).

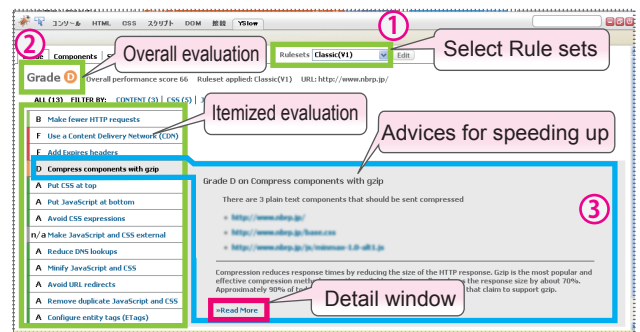


Fig. 3: Result window in YSlow

For example, if an item with grade "D" is clicked, advice for reducing the load time of the website will be displayed (Fig. 3-3). If more detailed information is necessary, click on "Read More" to move on to the detail window. Thus, YSlow evaluates websites and offers various types of advice to speed up the load time of the websites. Please utilize YSlow to accelerate the loading speed of your website.

(Tohru WATANABE)

Announcements

(Details are available at <http://www.nbrp.jp/>)

Prof. Yasunari Ogihara, Kihara Institute for Biological Research, Yokohama City University, who is in charge of NBRP wheat (sub institution), received an award from the Japanese Society of Breeding in the fiscal year 2009 for the study "Advancement of functional genomics in nuclear and cytoplasmic genomes in wheat."

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Editor's Note

This time, we introduced the latest topic on Hot News from Abroad. From Dr. Suzuki's article, we could imagine troubles in a place where 600 participants from 120 countries were meeting and discussing for a week over cups of Colombian coffee. The treaty discussed at the meeting was important and inevitably affects the administration of biological resources for research purpose; therefore, we will keep track of future meetings on the treaty. We thank Dr. Suzuki for his contribution to this newsletter. (Y.Y.)

"translated by ASL translation service and proofread by Sharoh Yip"